

A Hundred Million Souls

The box's rough paper felt like old leather in my hands as I passed it into my father's willing embrace. Releasing miniature air bubbles, it descending into the steely waters. After a long moment the outer closure released, springing open to let the sea come in and claim its lost souls.

The ashes of two perpetually intertwined hearts slowly mingled with the infinite molecules of water in the ocean. They fanned out first over inches and feet, then finally over thousands of miles until every part of the ocean felt their devotion. These souls joined the countless others cradled eternally by the all-powerful ocean, becoming one with it. Each pull of the tide washes their love up on some uncharted shore. Rachel Carson once said, "There is no drop of water in the ocean, not even in the deepest parts of the abyss, that does not know and respond to the mysterious forces that create the tide."

The two spirits we set free that golden afternoon from the rocky outcroppings of Newport's north jetty flow with the tide, joining the innumerable others who came before. They feel the hands of the sea not as a wave clutching at their feet but as an unfathomable pull at their heart stings.

That seems a fitting destiny in my mind. I am eternally grateful to Oregon governors Oswald West and Tom McCall for protecting not only the physical setting of the beach that my psyche so craves, but also the many emotional ties that I hold with the sacred sands. One day I too will slip into the endless ebb and flow.